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thechronicle

## Check out latest view of a £27m Tesco



The latest aerial view of the new £27 million Tesco superstore taking shape at Burnt Tree Island. Picture: Tim Thursfield

THIS aerial image shows a bird's eye view of the new £27million Tesco superstore taking shape in the Black Country.

Construction of the supermarket at Burnt Tree Island on the border of Dudley and Sandwell started in March.

As the photograph shows, most of the metal frame for the new building has been erected while work on the sales floor is well under way.

The lower floor of the building will be used for car parking. Work is also progressing on the

timber cladding on the front of the building and a glass entrance will also be put in place.

The store is expected to be completed before the end of the year and Tesco bosses hope it will be trading in time for Christmas.

### Pipes

Work to clear the site of debris was finished in March following demolition of the old store, including its landmark clock tower, in January.

The storerooms at the back of the site were taken down last because they contained refriger-

ation pipes which had to be cleared of gas.

Old mine shafts around the site also had to be filled in before construction could start. The original supermarket was built in 1992 on the site of the former Ewatts factory.

A temporary store with 120 staff has opened on the site while the new supermarket is being built. The remaining 300 workers have been transferred to other branches during building work.

It is hoped to use some of the materials from the old store in the rebuilding work but there are no plans to recreate the

clock tower in the new designs.

The store, which will be three times the size of the old one, is planned as a "concept store" and may include facilities such as a hair salon, nail bar and gym - although these developments are still under discussion.

Manager of the old store Peter Vinnicombe said: "Its size and design will allow us to experiment with new concepts."

When the old store closed bosses invited back shopper Edna Griffin, aged 73, who was the first customer through the doors when it opened in 1992. They wanted her to be among the last customers as well.

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**Ditch the workout...join the Party!**



Dean Overton, managing director of Overton Recycling in Lye, which is now 'recycling' former offenders back into society

## How the ex-offenders are recycled into work

A STOURBRIDGE waste company has started "recycling" former offenders back into useful members of society – and discovered a string of business benefits.

For Overton Recycling, a waste electrical and electronic equipment recycling business in Lye, working with offenders is proving to be a positive experience.

It is bringing benefits for both the business and the individuals involved.

Overton employs about 100 full-time workers, including a number of agency ones. Managing director Dean Overton was offered the opportunity to take on ex-offenders as agency workers for a 13-week period with a view to possible permanent employment.

"Having a criminal record is not in itself a good reason to deny someone a job," he said.

"Life is not straightforward for many people – it's easy to make mistakes but in most cases people deserve a chance to put things right.

"Working with ex-offenders has been a really positive experience for the business. We have five on the payroll at the moment, as agency workers, and all are doing well.

### Loyalty

"We don't view employees as a commodity. We believe that if we invest in them by giving them a second chance or providing opportunities to train and gain new skills, they will reward the business with their loyalty and hard work. We have not been disappointed."

Overton Recycling was founded in 2002 when Mr Overton spotted a gap in the market for the safe disposal of old fridges and freezers in accordance with European environmental legislation. Over the past decade, the business has diversified and today specialises in recycling all kinds of

electrical appliances – "anything with a plug on it, or battery in it", he said.

The business has increased its recycling capacity and uses technology to identify and sort specific metals and plastics so they can be processed ready for reuse by local manufacturing businesses.

A recent survey found that one in five employers (21 per cent) in the region had knowingly employed someone with a criminal record and the vast majority of them (80 per cent) were pleased with the outcome.

Mr Overton believes that more local companies should consider employing ex-offenders.

He said: "Of course employers are going to have concerns initially, but working with the OnTrak Programme is easy and very reassuring.

"Prior to starting their employment, detailed information is provided about the ex-offenders so you know more about them than you would about other employees."

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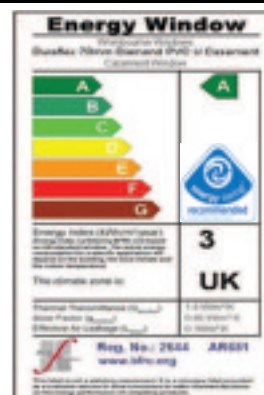
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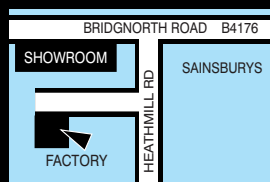
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## Skateboard fun at 102, now the birthday girl tries out a C5 trike but is not impressed

Born 105 years ago, Madge Hart admits she is still game for a laugh – not to mention the odd challenge of riding a Sinclair C5 trike. JOHN NASH meets this remarkable birthday girl



Cheers – it's a sherry a day for Madge



Right on cue – Madge eyes up the ball in a family pool challenge



A new challenge at 105 – birthday girl Madge Hart tries the Sinclair C5, but it fails to impress

WHEN Madge Hart was 102 her grandchildren persuaded her to try her hand at skateboarding, so it was no surprise that when she celebrated her 105th birthday on Saturday she agreed to try out an unusual trike which made the headlines in the mid-80s – for all the wrong reasons.

Braving the showers, Madge took the seat of inventor Clive Sinclair's ill-fated C5 and gave a thumbs-up before declaring: "I've never learned to drive. Where's the steering wheel? What makes it go?"

Like the thousands who ridiculed the eco-friendly invention at the time of its launch, she thought that "perhaps a proper car would be more suitable" and the sherry-a-day resident of a Halesowen old people's home picked up her stick and promptly headed indoors out of the rain.

"I had lessons, you know, and loved driving. But the examiner failed me for driving up to junctions too fast. He didn't appreciate the way I drove, even though my husband said I was a good driver. I was a good driver," she insisted.

Madge, who marked her special day with 30 family and friends at a party at Lapal House Residential Home, in Lapal Lane South, admits she's still game for a laugh "even though I cannot do all the things I used to".

In the past when her eyesight was keener, she would not shy away from the odd game of pool and was well-known for her sharp humour.

### Memories

Born when King Edward VII was on the throne, Madge moved into the home last August from her house in Castle Road West, Oldbury, and has fond memories of her home town of neighbouring Bearwood.

"Bearwood was quite a nice place and I remember as a girl growing up there with mum and dad. It was different altogether than today and no-one ever had to go into Birmingham to shop. You could get it all in Bearwood High Street, groceries,

clothes – everything you needed.

"We had no electricity and had to make do with gas lights, but in many ways it was not that different than things are today. People were still as busy, we had our problems with two world wars and families struggled just as they do now. Of course we didn't have the modern conveniences.

"People knew each other and helped each other more and it was a better community we lived in," she said.

She loved attending Bearwood Road School and clearly remembers one incident which landed her in big trouble with her mother.

"My mother dressed me in a white dress and it was new.

"I was instructed to take care . . . but the girl who sat at the back of me in class must have been jealous.

"We had ink wells and pens to dip in them. Before the lesson was finished she had made sure I had ink all down the back of my dress and it was ruined. I was in such a lot of



Flash-back to the skateboarding fun with Max and Ross Hart at Madge's 102nd birthday

trouble," she said. Raised with four brothers, Don, Albert, Cecil and Ken, she is keen to point out she was never spoilt as the only girl.

"Spoilt? Never! We were all treated the same and I had to get a job the same as my brothers," she said.

On leaving school at 14, Madge worked for Wesley & General Assurance in Birmingham for 10 shillings a week (50p) and enjoyed her hobbies of knitting and sewing.

### Resign

She married her childhood sweetheart, Harold, in Bearwood in 1929 and was promptly told by her bosses she would have to resign from the firm.

"They didn't employ married women. It was policy, not like it is now," she said.

"I met Harold at school when I was about 10 or 12 and there was

never anyone else for me. I enjoyed my job and rose through the ranks, but I was happy to leave to marry Harold. It was well worth it. I had a good life with him.

"I was just a little girl when the First World War broke out but it didn't seem to bother us as children, but by the time the Second World War started I was a full-time mother and housewife and it was very different for me.

"It was a constant worry," she recalled.

"Harold was called up and served as a captain in the Royal Artillery before becoming a teacher at the school where we met.

"It was a time of austerity but we were happy and I had four children, Alan, Michael, Janet and Norman," she added.

Born in Ethel Street, Bearwood, Madge has spent most of her years close to the Black Country except for

a short time in the 1930s when she lived in Gloucestershire where she took up singing in a choir.

During the 50s and 60s she was an active charity worker with the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS).

She has 11 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren, enjoys her daily tittle and regular letters from brother, Don – now aged 100.

### Remarkable

And the secret of her happy 105 years?

"Plain living, enjoying a quiet life and having a lovely family."

Proprietor of Lapal House, Tony Billingham, said: "She's absolutely remarkable and has a great sense of fun about her.

"I recall when she arrived here, she got out of the car unaided and walked up the steps just using a stick. Incredible."

# DAVID ALEXANDER

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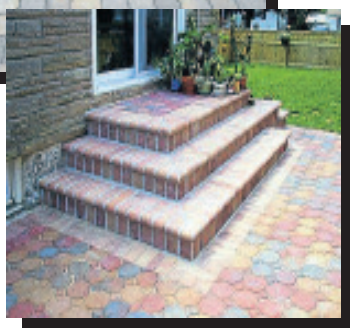
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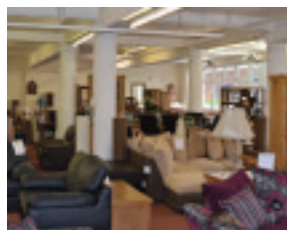
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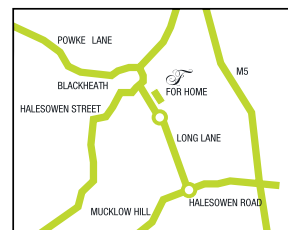


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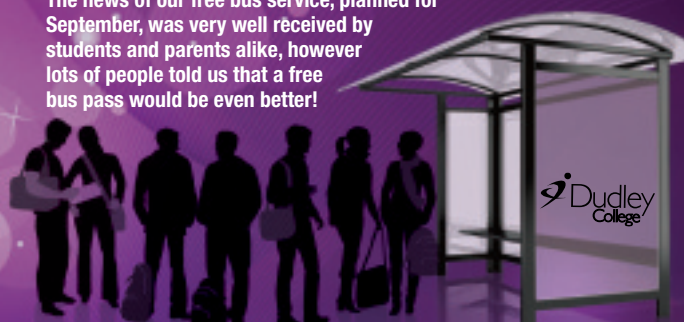




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# FREE BUS PASS

The news of our free bus service, planned for September, was very well received by students and parents alike, however lots of people told us that a free bus pass would be even better!



We've listened to this suggestion and are therefore happy to announce that we will indeed provide a **FREE BUS PASS** to all full time 16-18\* year olds starting with us in September 2011. Fuller details will be made available shortly.

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thechronicle

COMPETITION

## Joust a minute, tickets going free

THE ultimate spectator sport returns to Kenilworth Castle in July and the Chronicles have teamed up with English Heritage to offer 10 family tickets for close-up views of all the action.

Each ticket will also incorporate a month's free pass to Kenilworth Castle valid until August 10, to include all Time Traveller Go Archaeology and Time Traveller Go Knights and Princesses children activity events (Normal family admission is £20.80).

For two days - Saturday, July 9 and Sunday, July 10 - the castle's grounds will be filled with the pageantry of the medieval joust as visitors choose the knight that they want to support and cheer him on to victory in the medieval equivalent of the World Cup!



"Our jousters use special lances with balsa-wood tips, designed to retain all the spectacle of splintering wood, but without the potential injuries," says English Heritage's regional events manager, Karen Pike. "That said, when two knights and their horses, each weighing over a tonne with all of their armour, are speeding towards each other at around 30mph, even our lances still pack a real punch, and it requires all the skill of the rider to stay on the horse!" The Grand Medieval Joust is



Enjoy a close-up view of the action

not just about the competition; visitors will enjoy all the fun of a full medieval pageant, with medieval music and dance, spectacular displays of falconry and English Heritage's official court jester to keep the crowds entertained!

The event runs from 11am-5pm, with the castle itself opening an hour earlier at 10am. Admission, which includes entry to the site, the Elizabethan Garden and the Grand Medieval Joust is £10 for adults, £9 for concessions and £6 for children, with a family ticket (two adults and up to three children) for £26.

English Heritage members receive discounted entry of £2 for adults, £1.80 for concessions and £1.20 for children, or £5.20 for a family ticket.

A Park & Ride service will run every 10-15 minutes from 10am-6pm from Kenilworth clock tower bus stop. Park in the town centre car parks,

charges may apply. Disabled parking available at the main castle car park.

For more information, visit [www.english-heritage.org.uk/kenilworth](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/kenilworth) or call 01926 852078.

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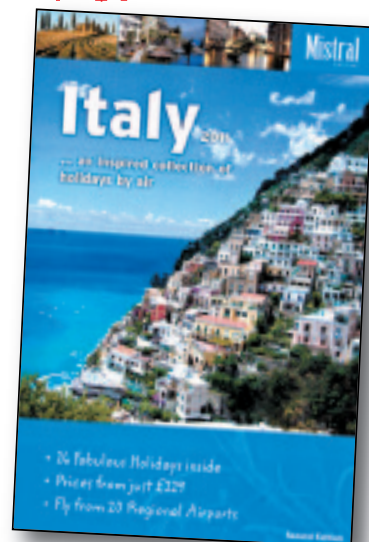
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# A little corner of Afghanistan that's helping Midland troops stay alive

**Black Country-born troops from the Queen's Royal Hussars are preparing for a tour of Afghanistan in a £14m replica Middle East settlement. Reporter SHAUN JEPSON and photographer ALAN EVANS joined them**

**A**S SOLDIERS from the Queen's Royal Hussars snake their way through an Afghan market place, a Chinook helicopter sweeps through the sky and lands at a nearby patrol base.

"They'll be dropping off more lads," mouths one of the troops as he keeps an eye-out for terrorist activity. It sounds like a typical day for soldiers in Helmand Province, where troops are faced with the Taliban threat every day.

But this isn't Afghanistan. The QRH, many of whom are from the West Midlands, have been navigating the streets of a £14 million replica Middle East settlement in Norfolk before they deploy for real in August.

It is part of a week-long intensive training package designed to test the regiment in conditions that are as close to identical as possible to those in Afghanistan.

## Dangerous jobs

The 12.5-acre fictional village, which has been given the name Ishmaragh, is populated by Afghan volunteers dressed as insurgents in traditional Taliban robes. Islamic calls to prayer ring out from the mosque and the dusty streets are strewn with motorbikes, tyres and carts.

The smell of food cooked by the villagers wafts through the streets and synthetic aromas, such as rotten meat, are pumped out.

The village is arranged around 25 concrete-clad compounds with between four and 12 homes in each arranged around a courtyard with a vegetable patch, as well as a washing line.

To add to the authenticity, all the homes are decorated with rugs and pots and pans, and shops are open selling fruit and rice.

"This training is vital because it gives us real knowledge and experience of what we can expect to face when we get out there," said Trooper Jack Sinar, from Kingswinford.

Afghanistan will be the first operational tour of duty for the former Crestwood School pupil, whose 47-year-old mother Sandra and 50-year-old father Paul still live in Kingswinford.

"It is the first one so it is important to get to practice drills in a realistic environment and I think this type of training is the best in the world."

"Before this, we did two weeks solid in the Brecon Beacons, which was really challenging," added Jack, whose father spent 10 years as a cor-

poral with the QRH and served in Northern Ireland and Kenya.

During his tour, 20-year-old Jack's job will be to search for dreaded Improvised Explosive Devices, or IEDs, while out on patrols. It is regarded as one of the most dangerous jobs in Afghanistan.

But the soldier says that although his parents and 18-year-old brother Tom have talked to him about the risks, his 20-year-old's girlfriend Samantha Kings prefers to put it to the back of her mind.

"She won't talk about it," said Jack. "She doesn't want me to go but she knows how much I want to do this and I feel confident in my training and that my mates will have my back."



Jack Sinar, 20, from Kingswinford



Ted Langstan, 21, from Dudley



Trees in the Suffolk countryside border the village, complete with the sounds and smells of an Afghan community



L/Cpl Nick Jones, 21, from Kingswinford

# On manoeuvres in £14m village of war

**Macready, 19, from Beaconsfield, Stafford.**

"You just have to put your trust in your mates and know that they're going to watch your back. We're like brothers."

Kyle, whose three sisters and brother live in Stafford along with his mother, 49-year-old Sarah Walters, said his motivation for the Afghanistan tour had been spurred on following the death of his father, Scott, just 10 months ago.

"My dad was always proud of me joining the army and I want to make him even more proud," said the former Weston Road S The QRH will have 130 men from its Warthog Squadron and a similar number of infantry in C Company in Afghanistan.

More of its troops will be in the training and advisory team working with the Afghan army and police, and another element will be based in Lashkar Gah.

Wolverhampton-born Trooper Liam Egan, from Wednesfield, will patrol parts of the country as well as ensuring fellow troops have supplies and ammunition.

The 21-year-old former St Edmund's Catholic School pupil said he would carry a picture of his three-month-old son, Theo, to help get him through his tour.

"I will be thinking about him and my girlfriend, Jodie," said life-long Wolves fan Liam, who used to play football for Wyrley

Rangers. "Part of me is looking forward to getting out there because it is the reason I joined the army. Before that I was working in jewellery shops fixing watches and I felt I had more to offer the world, so joined up."

He said his mother, 38-year-old Tracey O'Connor and step-father, 32-year-old Mark Cook, had concerns. "I've tried to tell them not to worry but they will," he added.

At the end of the village exercise, the QRH return to their barracks in Sennelager, Germany, where they will undergo a further Afghanistan-focused training course prior to being given three-weeks leave before their tour.

The QRH is the senior United Kingdom light cavalry regiment. It was formed in 1993 from the amalgamation of The Queen's Own Hussars and The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars.

The regiment traces its roots back to 1685 and during the past 320 years has been awarded 172 Battle Honours and eight Victoria Crosses.

The regiment is a frontline tank unit but because there are no British tanks in Afghanistan, troops will be in control of an armoured Warthog that runs on rubber tracks carrying troops across the varied terrain of Helmand Province that ranges from desert areas to the Green Zone alongside the Helmand River.

Members of the regiment have previously deployed to Iraq in 2006 and 2008, where it was engaged in various mentoring tasks with Iraqi forces in Basra City, Umm Qasr and Az Zubayr.

During the training exercise in Norfolk, commanding officers of the QRH are also put through their paces during the training exercise.

## History

They take part in regular shuras, which are gatherings involving local villager elders, who raise issues about the activity of troops operating in the vicinity.

The training area where the village is based is steeped in military history, having been originally established in 1942 when a battle training area was required and a 'Nazi village' established. The Afghan training camp was designed by the Operational Training Advisory Group (OPTAG) to replicate as closely as possible the situations troops could face on operations in Afghanistan.

From the call to prayer heard across a busy market place to a network of claustrophobic alleyways with high walls, the areas provide a realistic way to train troops and test their skills under demanding conditions.

As part of the training exercise, helicopters manned by army and RAF pilots pass through the sky dropping off supplies.

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